



**Connecticut  
Public Health  
Association**

Promoting Public Health in Connecticut Since 1914

**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
REGARDING  
RAISED SB NO. 1076: AAC THE REDUCTION OF GUN VIOLENCE**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**March 14, 2013**

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Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and esteemed members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, my name is Elaine Abrams. I serve as President Elect of the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of CPHA. Established in 1916, CPHA currently represents over 300 public health professionals committed to improving the health of all Connecticut residents through evidence-based policy and programs. **CPHA offers support of SB 1076 to the extent that it forwards Governor Malloy's proposed measures to reduce gun violence in Connecticut. However, this bill, as well as all policies which have recently been proposed to reduce gun violence in Connecticut, lack important measures that could further reduce gun violence in our state.**

CPHA recognizes that gun violence is a public health issue that arises from sociocultural, educational, behavioral, and product safety issues. Thus, in addition to supporting Governor Malloy's proposal, CPHA believes that additional legislative efforts are necessary, including a broad, multi-component public health approach that addresses gun violence, similar to the manner in which other leading causes of injury and death have been addressed in this country. While gun violence has historically been seen as a criminal justice issue, not a public health issue, it is simply a modern day epidemic, and stemming an epidemic requires a preventive approach. CPHA supports efforts that focus on prevention, including data collection through a statewide needs assessment, developing strategies to modify social norms, and a campaign to address product safety. As such, CPHA promotes the following as additional policy measures to stem gun violence in Connecticut:

**State Assessment of the Impact of Gun Violence on Communities and Preventive Strategies.**

Public health frequently conducts needs assessments on issues that affect the health and wellbeing of populations. Such an assessment provides an important framework for stakeholders to begin planning preventive interventions. A comprehensive assessment of the scope and breadth of gun violence in Connecticut would include an assessment of risk factors, trends and root causes followed by a comprehensive summary report of these findings, as well as strategies and recommendations for "best practices" to reduce gun violence.

**Modifying Social Norms.** Children and adults are exposed to staggering amounts of unrestricted and often glorified gun violence via entertainment (cinema, television and video games). While research around the short or long term effects of viewing gun violence is lacking, evidence exists that adults support the reduction of depictions of gun violence. Public health can assist in framing messages and the strategic use of celebrities, peers, physicians, etc. in media campaigns to shift socio-cultural norms about guns in a less favorable direction.

Product Safety Education. Reductions in motor vehicle deaths were accomplished via driver education, licensing, air bags and enforcement of seat belt use. Like motor vehicles, guns are a consumer product with the potential to cause serious harm if misused. Public health can assist in organizing media and educational campaigns designed to educate the public about the dangers of misuse of this consumer "product." One example is promoting safe storage of guns and ammunition. In addition, public health can support physicians and other health care providers' efforts to educate families and communities about gun safety. Finally, there are safety mechanisms for firearms which can be required to prevent accidental death and injury.

**CPHA urges the Connecticut Legislature to take immediate and comprehensive action to prevent gun violence in our state.** Too many lives are lost tragically through accidental misuse of firearms resulting from inadequate and negligent storage and insufficient prevention education efforts. Additionally, an inordinate number of lives are lost due to intentional use of firearms for violent acts—deaths which are largely preventable with adequate public policy measures to reduce gun trafficking and easy access to firearms. **The first step to achieving a significant, necessary and achievable reduction in gun violence in Connecticut is to pass comprehensive gun policy reform, as the Governor's proposal will do. Second, Connecticut needs to develop and fully fund robust injury and violence prevention programs on a statewide level to systematically address youth and street violence, domestic violence and suicide. Public health has the tools and expertise to address gun violence issues; it is time to start funding and supporting these efforts.**

Thank you for the opportunity submit testimony on this important matter.

Sincerely,  
Elaine Abrams, RN, CHES, MPH  
*President Elect*  
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#### References

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